



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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MEDIA STATEMENT

27 September 2023

GREENING THE FUTURE WITH WORLD TOURISM DAY

The Deputy Minister of Tourism, Fish Mahlalela, today proudly hosted the World Tourism Day Celebrations at Hartbeestpoort Dam in the North West Province under the theme: “*Tourism invests in a green future.*”

Tourism Month takes place annually in September. Since 1980, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) has annually celebrated World Tourism Day on 27 September based on a global theme. Although not gazetted, the Department of Tourism celebrates September as Tourism Month. Various activations take place across all provinces throughout the month to encourage South Africans to plan a Sho’t Left break or holiday.

“In light of the UN roadmap for a better world by 2030, the urgency for innovative solutions that transcend traditional investments has never been greater. We acknowledge the role of sustainable investments in forging a resilient and inclusive future for tourism,” stated the Deputy Minister.

In keeping with the theme, green investments play a pivotal role in nurturing a tourism sector that is both economically vibrant and environmentally responsible. Our vision is clear: to foster a tourism ecosystem where every investment is green, every endeavour nurtures our environment, and every step brings us closer to the Sustainable Development Goals outlined for 2030. Now is the time to innovate, to think beyond the beaten path, to envision tourist facilities powered by renewable energies, accommodations that are a haven of green architecture, and experiences that enable our guests to leave a green footprint behind. Investments in green technologies and infrastructures not only preserve our exquisite landscapes for generations to come but also spawn new avenues for economic growth and job creation. Furthermore, it is our moral imperative to safeguard our rich cultural heritage.

The purpose of highlighting Tourism Month is to create awareness about domestic tourism activities planned and to enthuse South Africans to travel their country. Locally, the World Tourism Day celebration is held under the Domestic Tourism campaign. It aims to foster awareness about domestic travel among communities as well as create awareness about the importance of tourism to the economy. This is important as domestic tourism is a significant pillar in the recovery process.

The host province this year is the North West Province. This province hosts many cultural gems and natural attractions. It is an idyllic province with all year sunny climate with various cultural and historical attractions. It is known as South Africa's "platinum province" for its vast underground resources and also produces platinum, gold diamonds and uranium. Popular destinations are the Magaliesberg Region and Pilanesberg Nature Reserve. The North West Province is also home to the world-renowned Sun City Resort and Hartebeespoort Aerial Cableway. The Unesco Taung Skull Fossil World Heritage Site can also be found here.

All South Africans are encouraged to be part of the We Do Tourism campaign and during the month of September visit family, friends or heritage sites to reconnect with our past. During Tourism Month, we promote domestic travel and encourage a culture of travel among South Africans while showcasing the variety of experiences, attractions and establishments that we have to offer and encourage everyone to take a Sho't Left.

"Tourism extends beyond simply powering economies and creating jobs or offering wanderlust explorers unforgettable experiences; it is a formidable force in building cohesive societies. It facilitates the breaking down of barriers of race, gender and class, thus fostering understanding and nurturing the rich tapestry of our shared humanity" the Deputy Minister added.

International travel is making a great comeback, as per the statistics reported by StatsSA. From January to July 2023, a total of 4.8 million international tourists arrived in South Africa, signifying a remarkable 70.6% surge compared to the same period in 2022. While this resurgence is undoubtedly encouraging, it's important to note that these figures still lag behind the pre-pandemic levels of 2019 by a 19.0% shortfall.

The tourism sector is encouraged by these figures. Within this 4.8 million arrivals, the African region has the biggest share while Europe played a significant role, contributing 14.3% (equivalent to 682,828) of the total tourists. These significant numbers paint a vibrant picture of South Africa's continued allure, an epitome of the global trend steering towards a post-pandemic recovery in travel. It is clear that our nation remains a choice destination, captivating the hearts of many with its rich cultural heritage, diverse landscapes, and remarkable wildlife. However, to reach our ambitious target of 21 million arrivals by 2023, we must flip the script and drive a clear well illuminated united path to our destination marketing. We must implement insight-driven marketing strategies and strengthening telling the story of our beautiful destination as we continue our efforts of attracting the new traveller in the post-COVID-19 landscape.

"We aim to foster a future of tourism that harmonises with nature, promotes prosperity responsibly, and embodies a green heart. I am talking about the proverbial "Triple Bottom Line," which consists of People, Planet, and Profit. Let us set forth on this path with vigour and determination, for the road ahead is green and bright, brimming with sustainable, innovative, and genuinely South African possibilities that inspire new ways. Let's make South Africa a great place to visit and a green destination to remember," the Deputy Minister concluded.

South Africa is open for tourism, embracing visitors from the rest of our beloved continent of Africa and beyond to immerse themselves in the rich tapestry of diverse cultures and heritages that define us.

Issued by Office of the Deputy Minister of Tourism, Fish Mahlalela

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